



Socialist-Revolutionaries, Narodniks, and other Adventurists

Our pattern is as follows: There are ten parts, one part per week. In each part there may be up to four items. The main post is given first. The others can be used as alternatives, if preferred, or as additional reading. The whole arrangement is designed to suit study circles who would meet once a week to discuss these texts.

In this part we have gone in reverse chronological order. The third and last item (attached) in this part is from the earlier, pre-revolutionary period, where Lenin is denouncing the “Revolutionary Adventurism” of the “Socialist Revolutionaries”, and in particular is **denouncing terrorism**.

Like Marx and Engels before him, and like the SACP of today, Lenin was faced with false revolutionaries, who pretended to be more revolutionary than the communists, but who were really something else.

The communists are referred to in this pamphlet as “revolutionary Social-Democrats”.

In this Russian case, the false revolutionaries were the petty-bourgeois “Socialist-Revolutionaries” (SRs) and their antecedents, the sentimental “Narodniks”. Both of these types of pseudo-revolutionary are likely to spring up in any revolutionary situation. In general, they represent the strong desire of the ruling class to reappear in a new guise, to steal the very revolution that they have provoked, and therefore to continue their rule in a new form. This is especially the case in a transition, like Russia’s at the time, **from a monarchy to a republic**.

The terrorist SRs called themselves “critics” and they called their revolutionary opponents (i.e. Lenin and the RSDLP) “orthodox”. This is like the liberals and anarchists of today in South Africa who denounce the SACP as “Stalinists” or “vanguardists”, or even as “yellow communists”, while imagining themselves to be free-thinkers.

This document was written in a typical situation, similar to Swaziland today, where there is a dying monarchical autocracy and a large but very poor peasantry, all festering in the dregs of feudalism. There is a dangerous “*absence of ideology and principles*”. Among other important things, Lenin writes:

“Let the agrarian programme of the Socialist-Revolutionaries serve as a lesson and a warning to all socialists, a glaring example of what results from an absence of ideology and principles, which some unthinking people call freedom from dogma.

“When it came to action, the Socialist-Revolutionaries did not reveal even a single of the three conditions essential for the elaboration of a consistent socialist programme: a clear idea of the ultimate aim; a correct understanding of the path leading to that aim; an accurate conception of the true state of affairs at the given moment or of the immediate tasks of that moment.

“They simply obscured the ultimate aim of socialism by confusing socialisation of the land with bourgeois nationalisation and by confusing the primitive peasant idea about small-scale equalitarian land tenure with the doctrine of modern socialism on the conversion of all means of production into public property and the organisation of socialist production.

“Their conception of the path leading to socialism is peerlessly characterised by their substitution of the development of co-operatives for the class struggle.”

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Revolutionary Adventurism, 1902, Lenin.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)